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RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000518

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA
ALSO FOR IO A/S BRIMMER
P FOR DRUSSELL, RRANGASWAMY
USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER
NSC FOR SHAPIRO, MCDERMOTT
DOD/OSD FOR FLOURNOY/KAHL/DALTON
DRL/NESA FOR WHITMAN, BARGHOUT
OVP FOR HMUSTAFA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PREF](#) [UNSC](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IS](#)
SY, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANON: WITH NEA DAS HALE, FM SALLOUKH SAYS
PALESTINIAN PEACE CRITICAL

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a May 9 meeting, Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh and visiting NEA DAS David Hale discussed Middle East peace and the Administration's commitment to working toward comprehensive peace with a sense of urgency. Salloukh dismissed Israeli comments about the need for "economic peace" before pursuing broader peace negotiations in a political context. Salloukh asserted that through the Arab Peace Initiative, Israel was offered a plan for peace on a "diamond tray," and opined that the U.S. should at least acknowledge Hamas as a "power" in its efforts to negotiate peace in the region.

2. (C) Salloukh acknowledged the recent opening of the Syrian Embassy in Beirut as a good sign of normal relations between the countries. He remarked that the "new chapter" in relations with Syria must be exploited for improving trade and securing Lebanese borders. He asked that the United States continue supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and mentioned he was pleased with the support of the international community in providing observers for the June 7 parliamentary elections. End summary.

MITCHELL: EVIDENCE
OF U.S. CONCERN

3. (C) In a May 9 meeting, NEA DAS David Hale, accompanied by the Ambassador and Poloff, met FM Fawzi Salloukh at his MFA office. Salloukh said he hoped for a visit to Lebanon by Special Envoy Senator George Mitchell, and praised Mitchell's recent work on Israeli-Palestinian peace as evidence of President Obama's focus on the region. Salloukh emphasized that the regional problems of militias, terrorism, and economic depravity evolved from not having resolved Israeli-Palestinian peace issues.

4. (C) Salloukh emphasized the depravation and security risks in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Salloukh reaffirmed that for 400,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon,

their "right of return" must never be forgotten. He complained about Israeli occupation of northern Ghajar, saying Israel should have withdrawn upon the signing of UNSCR 1701, and added that cluster munitions strike data was never provided by the Israelis. Salloukh asked the U.S. to continue U.S. support for the LAF. He insisted a strong LAF was needed to defend Lebanon, and would never be used to attack another country.

ISRAEL: NO ENCOURAGING SIGNS

15. (C) Salloukh surmised that the new Israeli government offered "no encouraging signs" for finding peace in the region. He downplayed Israeli statements about developing "economic peace" as a precursor to Palestinian peace negotiations in a political context. He said the Israelis, by not accepting the Arab Peace Initiative (API), had missed the "dream" of seeing its flag fly in 57 countries. "Why not respond?" he questioned. They were offered a peace plan on a "diamond tray," he concluded. Hale outlined public details of our strategy to advance peace, including through integration of API into our efforts.

ACKNOWLEDGE HAMAS

16. (C) Salloukh believed the U.S. should have been more open to Hamas when it took power in Gaza. He assessed that Hamas was a power that the U.S. should have acknowledged, although the U.S. approach to dealing with it "is a different matter,"

BEIRUT 00000518 002 OF 002

he concluded. However, Salloukh commented, all sides must cooperate in order to stop the killing.

RELATIONS WITH SYRIA "NORMAL"

17. (C) Salloukh acknowledged the recent opening of the Syrian Embassy in Beirut as a good sign of normal relations between the two countries. Noting the long history of family ties between Lebanese and Syrians, he remarked that the "new chapter" in relations with Syria must be exploited for improving trade and securing Lebanese borders. Salloukh recounted that the Lebanese Embassy in Damascus was already very busy assisting citizens.

ELECTIONS: OBSERVERS WELCOMED

18. (C) On elections, Salloukh recounted Lebanon's 60 year history of conducting elections, some more "questionable" than others, he mused, but Lebanon is glad to have the international observers, he declared.

19. (U) NEA DAS Hale has cleared this cable.
SISON